

~~SECRET~~ 18

NSC BRIEFING

DOCUMENT NO. 1
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
ORIGINATOR
CLASS: CONFIDENTIAL TS: C
ROUTINE BY DATE
AUTH: MR 70-2
DATE: 2 Jan 80
REVIEWER: 372044

20 December 1955

2 Jan 80
FRENCH ELECTIONS

I. Increased registrations and quickened tempo French electoral campaign:

- A. Over 1,200,000 new voters registered.
- B. Candidates are drawing record crowds in record number meetings.
- C. Poll indicates record 88% plan to vote.

II. Basically three-cornered race - with many tickets and alliances competing for non-Communist vote - ~~rules out~~ ^{rules} possibility of really stable majority.

A. Communists.

- (1) Confident that alliances this time - unlike 1951 - will be unable to deprive them of seats commensurate with popular strength.
- (2) Playing up worker solidarity and pressing for left government.

B. Mendes-France Republican Front.

(Socialists, most Radicals and minority of ex-Gaullists)

- (1) Attacking Right-Center "stagnation."
- (2) Advocating parliamentary and electoral reform to strengthen executive
- (3) Aiming largely at protest votes which usually go to Communists.

(4) Trying also for youth vote.
(5) Mendes-France attempting to create foreign Affairs issue by attacking ~~so CP~~ May's acceptance of ^{the} Die Nato Council statement on Soviet Middle East

C. Faure-Pinay coalition.

(Popular Republicans, conservatives, bloc of
Independents, Peasants, most ex-Gaullists; also
right wing Radicals)

- (1) Playing up current prosperity and promise of
higher living standards.
- (2) Aiming at Mendes-France youth following with
cut in military service.
- (3) Also asking support for reform permitting easier
dissolution of parliament.

D. Anti-tax rightists (Poujadists, mainly) running
negative campaign against both Mendes-France and
Faure candidates.

- (1) So far not against Communists.
- (2) Their activity responsible for some violence
so far.

III. Contest between Mendes-France bloc and Faure-Pinay confused
because:

- A. Mendes-France and Pinay very close in basic ideology,
differing only on method.
- B. Both blocs include wide range of opinions.
- C. Formal platforms of two blocs very similar
 - (1) Only clear issue separating them is state aid
for church schools (opposed by Mendes-France bloc.)

~~SECRET~~

IV. Both Pinay and Mendes-France pessimistic:

- A. Pinay fears loss of votes to anti-tax candidates, thus forcing use of proportional representation in many areas and giving seats to Communists.
- B. Mendes-France states privately his Republican Front can hope for only about 150 seats.

V. Both major non-Communist blocs vulnerable on Saar issue:

- A. Mendes-France on failure of his "Western European Union solution."

D.

25X6

- C. But results of the Saar Landtag elections (16 December) will help remove Saar as major electoral issue:

- (1) Failure of pro-German blocs to win 75% of Landtag reduces danger of stirring up French public.
- (2) Present moderate Saar government will retain office until after French elections.

Well-informed source
VI. ~~Ministry of Interior estimates, as of 21 December, for the 596 seats which exclude only the 30 assigned to Algeria. 564 seats of Métropolitain France.~~

- A. Communists to gain up to 25 seats, giving them about 135.

150
B. About ~~149~~ ¹⁵⁰ seats for Mendes-France's Republican Front.
300
C. About ~~272~~ ³⁰⁰ seats for Faure-Pinay coalition.
(1) Largest gains for Pinay's Independents;
(2) Popular Republicans lose some seats;
(3) Overall Gaullist strength ^(reduced below) cut-in half;
D. Extreme right 10.
~~42~~ are from overseas areas
~~5 seats from Africa~~
E. 30 Algerian seats to be filled later.